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Urban Schools Launch Unique National Purchasing Consortium

Groundbreaking Effort to Improve Quality of Math Materials For Teachers of English Learners

WASHINGTON – The Council of the Great City Schools, the nation’s primary coalition of large city public school systems, and the Los Angeles Unified School District, the country’s second largest school system, announced today the establishment of a nationwide “bench of contracts” with three publishers who have met the Council’s pre-determined quality criteria for ELL math materials: Curriculum Associates, LLC; Imagine Learning, Inc.; and Open Up Resources. This means that any school district in the nation can now use these contracts to purchase the vetted materials to support teachers of English learners.

This initiative is believed to be the first effort to harness the joint purchasing power of the nation’s major city school systems to improve the quality of instructional materials across state lines.

The historic effort began in 2012 when survey data revealed that urban school systems with the largest numbers of English learners were frustrated with the overall quality and availability of instructional materials for these students.

The initiative was launched shortly afterwards by the Council and its member districts, who together developed criteria to ensure that materials in both mathematics and English language arts effectively serve the language-acquisition needs of English learners and reflect the rigor of new academic math standards being implemented across the nation.

Based on those criteria, the Council assembled procurement officers from major urban school systems across the nation to design a system to make the joint procurement process possible,

gathered experts to review proposals, and requested that publishers develop or modify middle-school math materials in exchange for being included in a joint purchasing agreement.

More than 100 publishing groups requested initial information on the project; nine publishers submitted proposals to participate in the rigorous development and selection process; and three publishers were ultimately chosen.

The Los Angeles school district stepped forward to serve as the lead district in the selection and contracting process, and 15 other major city school systems have expressed initial interest in buying materials using the joint purchasing agreements.

“This is the first national effort that we know of where a consortium of major school systems has banded together to drive market demand for higher quality instructional materials,” said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. “Our school districts have sent a clear message that they will demand more for these students and more for their scarce educational funding.”

“We must invest in proven strategies, programs and instructional materials to improve student achievement,” said Los Angeles Unified Superintendent Austin Beutner. “This groundbreaking initiative will help educate and inspire the next generation of leaders.”

“Los Angeles Unified is proud to serve over 100,000 English-language learners and over 130,000 reclassified students who enrich our schools and communities with their home language and culture,” said Los Angeles Unified Board Member Kelly Gonez. “But we know that English-learners historically have not had access to the same educational opportunities as their peers. I am so proud that, thanks to the leadership of Los Angeles Unified and the Council, English-learners and their teachers in Los Angeles and across the nation can benefit from these high-quality and accessible instructional materials. We have shown not just through our words, but through our actions, that we believe in the potential of all kids. Through our collective power we are helping every child in our communities to achieve their dreams.”

The Council of the Great City Schools will now inform school districts nationwide of the availability of the contracts and will encourage public school systems of all sizes to purchase high quality math materials for English learners using them. There are no fees or conditions for school district use of the contracts.

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